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Sylvia T. Wargon

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# Using Census Data For Research On The Family in Canada\*

SYLVIA T. WARGON

## 1. Introduction

It is a paradox, that, in the field of the study of the family, a plethora of writings and research by sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists has contributed little to our theoretical and empirical understanding of family units. Of the numerous studies on the family produced in the 20th Century, only few works stand out as notable contributions.

In the field of demography, the study of the family is relatively new, the greatest progress to date having been made in the United States, notably in the work of Paul C. Glick (1947, 1957, 1959). An early census monograph, *The Canadian Family*, gave ample evidence of the fruitfulness of the demographic approach to the study of the family, by investigating aspects of the historical development, the size, composition and structure of Canadian families and households, using census and other relevant data (Pelletier et al 1937). And yet, although the Canadian Census continued to compile voluminous data on households and families, no major work of this kind on the Canadian family has ever been undertaken since.

Over the years since Glick pioneered the use of demographic data in research on the family, there has been a growing awareness of the value of population statistics and demographic techniques in the study of family and household units. The use of such studies of families and households in serving the needs of empirical research, theory building, and policy making has been increasingly stressed at population conferences (IUSSP, 1963), in standard texts on demography, (Spiegelman, 1955, 1968; Bogue, 1969) and in the work of sociologists and demographers interested in using population data for historical, national, and cross-cultural research on the family, and in developing family theory (Ogburn and Nimkoff, 1955; Davis, 1959; Goode, 1963, 1968; Collver, 1963; Levy, 1965a, 1965b; Burch, 1967, 1968, 1970).

Some recent sociological and demographic research on the family in Canada illustrate the research possibilities of the Canadian census data on family and household units (Jacobsen, Wakil, 1971; Kalbach and McVey, 1971). For those interested in using these data further, this paper presents the various family and household concepts used in the Canadian

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\*The writer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in this paper and for any errors or deficiencies that may appear in the analysis or conclusions.

census, examines the validity and efficacy of the 'census family' definition which is used to compile most of the Canadian family data, and points up, in a general way, some of the limitations and advantages for empirical research, of the statistics based on these concepts.

## 2. *The study of the family in demography*

The study of the family in demography is the study of human groups, and it utilizes, besides the traditional demographic data on births, marriages, divorces and deaths of *individuals*, the information on *households* and *families* collected by population censuses and surveys around the world. The study of family and household units is to be distinguished from the study of the family by demographers interested in fertility, which is based on information for individual women according to their number of children ever born.

Population statistics for individuals are quite different from those for families and households, and this difference should be understood. Population data used in demographic and other research have traditionally taken the form of aggregations of individual cases. This has been so, in spite of the fact that most people exist in real life as members of household and family groups. Household and family data obtained from population censuses, represent information for *groups* of individuals. Furthermore, household and family data as obtained from both "de jure" and "de facto" censuses, refer to groups of people occupying or sharing their meals in the same housing unit or dwelling at the time of enumeration, that is, to *residential units*.

In a general way, it can be said that the household is a basic census concept which serves as an important unit of enumeration, identifying as it does the *housing unit* occupied by one person or a group (usually a family), or groups of persons, or the *housekeeping arrangements* of one person, or a group (usually a family), or groups of persons within a dwelling, or *both*, depending on the specific details of the particular definition of household used (United Nations, 1958, 11; 1959, 70; 1969a, 1). Since the household is usually the basic unit of enumeration in a population census or survey, members of a household are identified at the enumeration stage. On the other hand, statistics for family groups do not as a rule require special collection, but are created at the tabulation stage, by the application of a particular definition of the family to the completed census returns. The particular definition of the family used will determine the way in which the information for the individual members of the household is combined or "grouped". Herein lies the importance of the definition of the family which is used in a population census. Also important is the fact that if sufficiently detailed information on the composition of households is obtained by a census, it is possible, at the data processing and tabulation stage, to obtain data according to more than one definition of the family. A concrete example is the compilation of information in the Canadian Census, since 1956, according to the

'economic family' definition, over and above the data routinely prepared according to the 'census family' definition, and the plan to compile and tabulate, from the 1971 Census data, information for 'mover' and 'migrant' families.

### 3. Definitions of family and household in the Canadian Census

#### 3.1 The demographic family

It is appropriate here to refer briefly to the family as traditionally discussed by demographers interested in fertility and sometimes called the demographic family. The latter does not refer to the residential unit, but rather to the number of children even born to a woman during her child-bearing life-time. As a rule, still-births, adopted or step-children are not counted in this family, but all children born alive are counted, even those who have since died, or who have moved away from home. Detailed studies of trends in, and various aspects of Canadian fertility, based on the relevant data collected at the 1941 and 1961 censuses, are available in a number of Statistics Canada publications (Charles, 1948; Henripin, 1968; Canada, 1968).

#### 3.2 The census family

The Canadian census family definition, which has been in use since the 1941 Census defines a family as consisting of a husband and wife, with or without never married children, or a parent with one or more children who have never married, living together in the same dwelling. Adopted children and step-children are counted as own children, as are guardianship children under 21 years of age. Once a child is married, he or she ceases to be considered a part of the parents' family for census purposes, even though living in the same household. Such married children, when living with husband or wife, and/or children, constitute a second family unit within the same household. All unmarried sons and daughters living at home, regardless of age, are considered by definition, as members of families, although those 25 and over are not included as children in the relevant census tables. Unmarried sons and daughters, 24 years of age and under, are classified, for census purposes, and are tabulated as "children" in families (Canada, 1962).

Family statistics based on this definition, give information for a group of persons who are living together when enumerated (that is, for a residential unit), and they do not include children or parents who have died, or who are living permanently elsewhere. Table 1 presents some summary figures compiled according to the census family concept, which show the trend in family size in Canada over a 25 year period.

It is of some interest to note that the UN recommends, for purposes of the analysis of household composition, a concept of the family which is identical to the Canadian census family concept above: a married couple or (lone) parents with their never-married children living in the same household. The UN refers to the latter as the "conjugal family"

TABLE 1

POPULATION, CENSUS FAMILIES, AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS, AND  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 24, PER FAMILY,  
CANADA, 1941-1966

Canada <sup>1</sup>	1941	1951	1956	1961	1966
Population	11,489,713	14,009,429	16,080,791	18,238,247	20,014,880
Census Families	2,509,664 <sup>2</sup>	3,287,384 <sup>3</sup>	3,711,500 <sup>4</sup>	4,147,444 <sup>5</sup>	4,526,266 <sup>6</sup>
Persons in Census Families	9,885,078	12,216,103	14,077,213	16,095,721	17,681,728
Average Number of Persons per Family <sup>7</sup>	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.9
Average Number of Children per Family	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9

<sup>1</sup>Newfoundland and Yukon and Northwest Territories excluded for 1941, and included for all subsequent years.

<sup>2</sup>Census of Canada, 1941, Volume I, "General Review", Table 107, p. 866.

<sup>3</sup>Census of Canada, 1951, Volume III, "Housing and Families", Table 139, p. 139-1.

<sup>4</sup>Census of Canada, 1956, Volume I, "Population", Table 43, p. 43-1; Table 56, p. 56-1.

<sup>5</sup>Census of Canada, 1961, Volume II - Part 1, Bulletin 2.1-7 "Families by Marital Status and Age of Head", Table 73, p. 73-1.

<sup>6</sup>Census of Canada, 1966 Volume II (2-13), "Families by Type", Table 91, p. 91-1.

<sup>7</sup>For Provincial Averages, see Kalbach and McVey 1971, p. 293, Table 12:8.

"nucleus", which may consist of the following combinations: (a) a married couple without children; (b) a married couple with one or more never-married children, or (c) one parent (either father or mother) with one or more never-married children (United Nations, 1969b, 20, 21).

It will also be noted that the Canadian census family definition, with its emphasis on the marital and/or parent-child relationship, and the exclusion of "other relatives" in the same household or dwelling, corresponds more closely to the "nuclear" or "conjugal" family concept (sometimes referred to as the "natural" or "biological" family), than does, for example, the U.S. census definition of the family. The latter, since it refers to all members of a household related by blood, marriage or adoption, emphasizes more the economic (spending, consumption) aspects of the family unit (U.S. 1960, xi), and is identical to the Canadian economic family definition.

### 3.3 *The economic family*

In connection with the 1956 and 1961 Censuses of Canada, families were defined, and data compiled, according to the additional definition of economic family (Canada, 1959; Canada, 1967). An economic family is defined as two or more persons resident in the same household, and related by blood, marriage or adoption (Canada 1967, 5). Under the census family definition, the relationship must be that of a husband-wife, or a parent-unmarried child, but under the economic family definition, any relatives living together in the same household constitute a family unit.

The Canadian census undertook the tabulation of data for economic families for a number of reasons. The economic family concept coincides with the definition of the family used in the U.S. census, and makes possible U.S.-Canadian comparisons. Furthermore, consumer, welfare, and dependency studies require information on families considered as economic units. For example, using the census family concept older relatives dependent on the family income, cannot be included as "members" of the family. However, such older persons count as family members according to the economic family definition. Table 2 presents the total numbers and average size of economic families, for Canada and the provinces for 1961.

TABLE 2

PERSONS IN ECONOMIC FAMILIES, AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER FAMILY, CANADA AND PROVINCES, 1961\*

	Total Economic Families	Total Persons in Economic Families	Average Number of Persons per Family
Canada	4,106,235	16,623,924	4.0
Newfoundland	84,558	432,930	5.1
Prince Edward Island	21,559	96,015	4.4
Nova Scotia	158,633	671,130	4.2
New Brunswick	121,722	553,076	4.5
Quebec	1,093,167	4,838,645	4.4
Ontario	1,494,741	5,688,961	3.8
Manitoba	215,439	831,875	3.8
Saskatchewan	212,241	833,394	3.9
Alberta	304,246	1,201,703	3.9
British Columbia	393,090	1,445,359	3.6
Yukon and Northwest Territories	6,839	30,836	4.5

\*Census of Canada, 1961, Volume IV, Bulletin SX-10 "Population Sample: Economic Families", Statement 2, p. 7.

### 3.4 *The household*

A household, as defined in the Canadian census, consists of a person or group of persons occupying one dwelling (Canada, 1971). It usually consists of a family group, with or without lodgers, employees, etc. However, it may consist of a group of unrelated persons, of two or more families sharing a dwelling, or of one person living alone. Every person is a member of some household, and the number of households equals the number of occupied dwellings. There are "private" and "collective" households. The private household consists of one person or a small group of persons occupying an ordinary dwelling. A very useful feature of the Canadian statistics for private households is their presentation according to "family type", that is, data are compiled and tabulated for "family" and "non-family" households. Collective-type households include hotels, large lodging houses (with ten or more lodgers),

institutions of all types, military camps, lumber camps and other establishments of a similar nature (Canada, 1963). Table 3 presents some figures for private households in Canada according to family and non-family type for the census years 1951, 1956, 1961 and 1966.

TABLE 3  
PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS, BY FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY TYPE,  
CANADA, 1951-1966

Canada <sup>1</sup>	1951 <sup>2</sup>	1956 <sup>3</sup>	1961 <sup>4</sup>	1966 <sup>4</sup>
Private Households	No. 3,409,295 P.C. 100.0	3,923,646 100.0	4,554,736 100.0	5,180,473 100.0
Family Households	No. 3,024,285 P.C. 88.7	3,464,226 88.3	3,948,935 86.7	4,376,409 84.5
Non-Family Household	No. 385,010 P.C. 11.3	459,420 11.7	605,801 13.3	804,064 15.5

<sup>1</sup>Includes Newfoundland, all years, but excludes Yukon and Northwest Territories for 1951.

<sup>2</sup>Census of Canada, 1951, Volume X, Table 95, p. 95-1.

<sup>3</sup>Census of Canada, 1961, Volume VII, Bulletin 7.2-3, Table 2, p. 8-48.

<sup>4</sup>Census of Canada, 1966, Volume II (2-5), "Households by Type", Table 28, p. 28-1.

The usefulness of census data on households, in research, has been amply illustrated in the work of Ogburn (1955), Goode (1963), Levy (1965a) and Burch (1967, 1968, 1970), all of whom have attempted to test critically, certain long-hold assumptions about the family in previous eras, or about changes in the family over time, using real or simulated household data. A monograph based on the 1931 Census data, *The Canadian Family*, also used household data to advantage, in examining the historical trend in the size of the Canadian family (Pelletier et al., 1938).

### 3.5 *The mover family and the migrant family*

On the assumption that migration is not purely an individual phenomenon, but takes place within a family context plans have been made to compile data for mover and migrant families, in connection with the 1971 Canadian census. In the definitions to be used, which are presented below, migrants include all inter-municipal movers, that is, all intra-provincial (excluding intra-municipal) movers, inter-provincial movers and international movers; while movers include all migrants and intra-municipal movers. Further specifications in the definition regarding date of marriage are intended to guarantee that it is the family group that moves or migrates, and not just the head of the family. Hence:

#### A mover family is

a husband-wife family with the same date of first marriage of husband and wife, prior to June 1966 and both movers; or a one-parent family with the head's date of first marriage prior to June 1966 and a mover.

**A migrant family is**

a husband-wife family with the same date of first marriage of husband and wife, prior to June 1966 and both migrants; or a one-parent family with the head's date of first marriage prior to June 1966, and a migrant.

Although the data for such mover and migrant families will be compiled and tabulated at the data-processing stage, the latter has been made possible only because of considerable forethought and pre-planning which involved decision making as regards the definitions to be used, the inclusion of a new question (for the Canadian census) on the date of first marriage of the *male* population, and the specification of tabulations for such families.

**4. The efficacy of the census family definition for compiling family data.**

In the Canadian census, the largest amount of census data for families is compiled on the basis of the census family definition. The question that must be asked is: how "valid", how "efficient," is this concept for creating family data? The efficacy of the Canadian census family definition as a basis for compiling data on families to be used in research, can only be judged in the light of the degree to which it can be said to represent fairly Canadian families. In order to determine the latter, it is necessary to examine certain "apparent" limitations of the concept: it defines only the residential unit; it covers a wide array of diverse groups; and its use began only with the 1941 Census, before which time, the family definition was different.

**4.1 The family defined as a residential unit.**

The Canadian census enumerates individuals in households on a *de jure* or resident basis. Hence, the Canadian census family includes only those members of the family who happen to be living together in the same household at the time of the Census. This is regarded by quite a number of students of the family as evidence that the census family definition is not properly descriptive of families, and limits the use of census data for empirical research on the family because it excludes members who live elsewhere. In cases where two related families occupy the same household, it has been argued that the census category of "related" family, as it applies to married children occupying the same household as their parents actually suggests a greater weakening of contact and obligation than in fact exists. (Jacobsen, 1971, 28). It is further argued by quite a few, that census data compiled for the family regarded as a residential unit does not take into account the "extended" aspects of family and kin relationships, such as the communication, visiting and help patterns, which transcend the individual residential units to create "kin networks" with family relations who maintain other households which are geographically close, or at a considerable distance. A formidable amount of literature in contemporary sociological research on the family has grown up in connection with the study of such kin networks.

It is important to begin the discussion of these points by noting that the contemporary family in America is, after all, a residential group. The emphasis on a family definition as having to include members who live away, or apart, would seem to stem from a deep-seated bias in favour of defining the family in terms of kinship structure, rather than only in terms of the smaller residential unit, a bias which is not warranted by the facts of family living on this continent.

It must also be kept in mind that the value of family statistics and of family studies lies in the degree to which they are able to treat families acting as entities or units. This aspect, of some importance to those concerned with the practical and policy needs which demand information on families regarded as economic units, is of even greater importance to the sociologist. The definition of the family as a residential unit, and as limited to the parent-unmarried child community (to the exclusion of married children in the same household who are counted as separate families), serves this purpose of viewing a family group as an entity or unit, with certain specific characteristics. The interaction and sharing between two related families occupying the same household, and the whole complex of relationships implied by such co-residence is simply a separate area of inquiry to the study of family units based on census and related data.

Furthermore, in regard to research on the family, there is no contradiction between the concept of the family considered as a residential unit, and the existence of kin-network relationships which transcend the separate households to create or reinforce family ties.

Family members who live permanently apart or away from the household of their immediate family include, firstly, older family members on their own, or younger family members who do not yet belong to another conjugal unit created by their own marriage, but who maintain their own household, or who are members of another household. Secondly this category of family members includes those who belong to a conjugal unit created by their marriage, and who maintain their own household elsewhere. For purposes of simplicity, the following discussion is limited to these two classes of "immediate" family members.

In regard to the first group of family members mentioned above observation of every day contemporary life indicates that in recent years, unmarried young persons in their late teens and early twenties, have tended more and more to set up (non-family) households of their own, or to create or join other (non-family) households. An example of the latter is the phenomenon, seemingly more and more common, of a group of young people who join forces to create "communes". These trends do not invalidate, at least for now, and probably for some time to come, the Canadian census family definition as a conceptual tool for compiling data on the family. Indeed, if anything, it makes the census family definition more valuable, and demonstrates at the same time, the impor-

tance of the Canadian census household concept and data, as supplementing the census family concept and data. The Canadian household data, since it is available by family type, affords the opportunity to examine trends in family and non-family households. Present trends and anticipated changes in the numbers and growth of the non-family households, which are evident from the figures in Table 4, may give us important clues to incipient transformations in the modes of family living in Canada.

TABLE 4

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS, BY AGE OF HEAD, CANADA, 1956-1966.

Canada Household Heads, by age	Number of Households		Percentage Increase 1956-1966 <sup>3</sup>
	1956 <sup>1</sup>	1966 <sup>2</sup>	
<i>Family Households</i>			
All household heads	3,464,226	4,376,409	26.3
Under 25 years	117,223	198,301	69.2
25-34	774,507	930,804	20.2
35-44	887,693	1,108,482	24.9
45-54	714,563	942,785	31.9
55-64	500,788	649,793	29.8
65+	469,452	546,244	16.4
<i>Non-Family Households</i>			
All household heads	459,420	804,064	75.0
Under 25 years	21,512	70,764	229.0
25-34	42,475	83,872	97.5
35-44	49,957	81,651	63.4
45-54	71,956	109,920	52.8
55-64	94,962	153,545	61.7
65+	178,558	304,312	70.4

<sup>1</sup>Census of Canada, 1961, Volume VII, Part 2, Bulletin 7.2-3, "Household Size and Composition", Table 2, p. 8-48.

<sup>2</sup>Census of Canada, 1966, Volume II (2-6), "Household Characteristics by Marital Status, Age and Sex of Head," Table 41, p. 41-1.

<sup>3</sup>These figures should be interpreted with a certain caution as the increases shown may be partly due to increases in the size of the total population in these age groups. The percentage increase in the selected age groups for 1956-1966, presented below are based on data from the 1956 and 1966 censuses, and the age group 15-24 is used to approximate those "under 25". The considerable increase in the size of the total age group 15-24 in the decade 1956-1966 as shown below was probably due to the coming of age of those born in the "baby boom" years during and after the Second World War.

#### *Percentage Increase in Selected Age Groups, 1956-1966*

All ages 15+	23.6
15-24	44.0
25-34	28.6
35-44	18.8
45-54	28.9
55-64	28.2
65+	23.8

In regard to family members who belong to a conjugal unit created by their marriage, and who maintain their own household: it has been frequently argued that research based on census data for residential units is limited because it can neither take into account, nor examine the kin-network relationships which are built up and maintained between such family members and their relatives in the households from which they came.

Kin-networks in the modern world represent the expressive or affective side of familial relationships, and their study is designed to show the differential degree to which so-called "extended" family patterns exist and are maintained in contemporary society, their impact and importance as amongst different socio-economic, ethnic and cultural groups and at different stages of the family life-cycle. In this connection, it is of some interest, to note that the measures of extended familism developed by Winch and his associates are based on households. In other words, it is necessary to "see" families as residential units before embarking on studies of kin-network relationships. Furthermore, the statistical study of families viewed as residential units does not preclude the study of such kin-networks: the two are simply different areas of study, requiring different types of data. Census data on families and households cannot be used to study the family communication patterns extending beyond the dwelling place of the family. The latter is an area of family research which is more readily studied on the basis of, for example, questionnaire and interview data (Bott, 1959; Winch et al., 1967; Winch and Greer, 1968; Winch, 1970; Lueschen et al., 1971).

The same must be said of the study of the interaction of kin within the same families sharing the same household. This aspect of family relationships is an area of inquiry which cannot be studied using the census data: other types of information are required. As Jacobsen has so well pointed out in answering the questions she herself has raised, (Jacobsen, 1971, 29), in the case of two related families sharing the same household, additional empirical studies are required in order to explain, for example, how sharing is arranged and what kinds of kinship relationships are most regularly utilized.

#### *4.2 The family defined to include various diverse groups.*

In the contemporary social science literature on the family, frequent reference is made to the "nuclear" family. The latter term is generally intended to describe that unit composed of two co-habiting parents and their unmarried children who reside with them. The nuclear family, so conceived, is an "ideal type" (to use Max Weber's term), that is, a convenient conceptual tool or model.

On the other hand, the Canadian census family definition is a tool which is used to compile empirical data about families in Canada. A definition which is designed to create family statistics for Canada on a

national and provincial basis, must of necessity represent a wide variety of family groups. Hence the census family concept used in the Canadian census can refer to all the following diverse groups: (a) a young divorcée who rears one or more children in a flat in her parent's household; (b) a young widower living in a rented home who has been left to bring up one or more children alone, due to the death of his spouse; (c) a newlywed couple who have just set up housekeeping in a few rooms in their parent's home, or in an apartment of their own; (d) a young couple who reside with a number of their young children (but with no others, related or non-related) in a home of their own in the suburbs; (e) an elderly couple, residing in a flat or an apartment because their children have grown and live elsewhere with their own young families.

It is necessary to justify a definition which includes as families, the five diverse groups listed above. Basically, the question that must be asked is: "How appropriate is the Canadian census family definition as a tool for isolating out those aspects which make a variety of contemporary "groups" or "units" in Canada, *distinguishable as families?*"

In order to try and answer this question, let us begin by citing some relevant data for the United States. Glick and Bogue have shown that the U.S. Census statistics do not bear out the stereotyped idea that the typical American household consists of a married couple living together with one or more dependent children, and with no other family relatives present in the home. According to a table presented in Glick's "American Families", in 1953, only 28.6 percent or less than one-third of all household units in the United States consisted of a married couple and their own children under 18 years of age, and with no other relatives present. This table also shows that married couples with no children under 18 present, constituted, at 27.4 percent, just about the same proportion of total household units as did the so-called "nuclear" or "ideal-type" family (Glick, 1957, 2). In similar fashion, Donald Bogue, using 1960 U.S. census data found that, although the stereotyped idea of the typical American household is that of a father and mother living together with one or more children, *in fact*, slightly less than one half of the households enumerated in the 1960 U.S. census fitted this description, and slightly more than one half either lacked children, lacked a parent, or did not even contain a family at all. In households occupied by husband-wife families, nearly 40 percent did not contain children under 18 years of age (Bogue, 1969, 376).

For what reason did the "ideal" nuclear-type family constitute such a small proportion of American household units in 1953, and in 1960? The answer to this question lies in the obvious fact that it is precisely because it is the "ideal" type. The surprisingly small size of the percentage figures cited above support the hypotheses made and "tested" by Goode, Levy, and Burch, that ideal family types have not been, and are not, ~~model~~ family types.

Although Canadian data which correspond exactly to the American data cited above are not available, the Canadian census data on families by age of head, and by number of children at home can be used instead. Table 5 presents, for 1961 and 1966, the number and percentage of Canadian families with no children 24 years and under at home, by age of the family head.

TABLE 5

TOTAL FAMILY HEADS, AND NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY HEADS WITH NO CHILDREN UNDER 24 AT HOME,  
CANADA, 1961 AND 1966

Family Heads, by Age	Total Family Heads	1961 <sup>1</sup>		Total Family Heads	1966 <sup>2</sup>	
		Family Heads with no children under 24 at home	Number %		Family Heads with no children under 24 at home	Number %
Total Family Heads	4,147,444	1,216,793	29.3	4,526,266	1,309,580	28.9
Under 25 years	187,077	68,155	36.4	229,691	95,130	41.4
25-34	958,084	149,392	15.6	987,260	154,116	15.6
35-44	1,053,323	94,889	9.0	1,141,162	88,625	7.8
45-54	867,479	164,927	19.0	959,002	166,075	17.3
55-64	565,209	292,072	51.7	657,657	325,796	49.5
65+	516,272	447,358	86.7	551,494	479,838	87.0

<sup>1</sup>Census of Canada, 1961, Volume II - Part 1, Bulletin 2.1-7 "Families by Marital Status and Age of Head, Table 73.

<sup>2</sup>Census of Canada, 1966, Volume II (2-12) "Family Characteristics by Marital Status, Age and Sex of Head", Table 79.

These data indicate that, of total heads of families, 29 percent of those enumerated in both the 1961 and 1966 censuses had no children at home. For family heads under 25, the percentage with no children at home was much higher, at 36.4 in 1961 and over 40 percent in 1966, but the percentages declined with increasing age of head, as might be expected. The percentages of family heads with no children at home in the age groups over 55 years were again higher. Heads aged 55-64 years with no children at home constituted 51.7 percent in 1961 and 50 percent in 1966 of total family heads. For family heads 65 years and over, those without children living with them were 86.7 percent of this total age group in 1961, and 87.0 percent in 1966.

Keeping in mind Glick's question as to "how far a group can deviate from the typical cluster of parents and children and still be regarded as a family" (Glick, 1957, 1), we need to ask: What other units besides the ideal, nuclear type defined by sociologists, can be legitimately regarded as families within the Canadian context? In order to try and answer this question, a list will be made of all "possibilities" of marital and parental units, over and above the "ideal type", which are implied in the Canadian census family concept. In examining these "possibilities"

as "families", it is important to keep in mind the concept of the family life cycle as developed by Glick. The possibilities are presented under two main headings, as follows:

#### *Presence or absence of Children*

##### *1. Married couples with no children*

- (1) but anticipate having them
- (2) have had one or more but these children have died; still anticipate having them
- (3) have had children, or have not had children, but at present have no children and can *never* have any children
- (4) have had children by former mates, but *these* children live with other parents, or live independently: still anticipate having *more* children
- (5) had children but these children have grown and live apart.

##### *2. Lone parents with one or more children*

A male or female parent who is separated, widowed, divorced or single, and who maintains one or more own or adopted children.

#### *Household Arrangements*

In addition to the housing arrangement implied by the "ideal type" "nuclear" family — the nuclear family maintains its own household and has no others, relatives or non-relatives, residing in the same household — the following are the household "possibilities" for each of the cases described above:

- (1) Maintains own household, but there are one or more relatives, or lodgers, or employees present.
- (2) Does not maintain own household, but is part of someone else's household.

In the cases listed above under "Married Couples with no Children", it is possible that:

- (a) couples in cases (1), (2) and (4) will have own children. This could transform them into the ideal type depending on their household arrangements.
- (b) couples in cases (1), (2), (3) and perhaps (4) cannot have own children, but may conceivably adopt or take in a ward. This could transform them into the ideal type, depending on their household arrangements. In Case (4), children residing with former mates may return. In Case (5), an elderly couple may adopt, take in a ward, or become responsible for the rearing of a grandchild or other young relative.

It is obvious that all of the "cases" presented above must be included as "families", and each according to its particular (of the two possibilities presented) household arrangement. As one author has pointed out, some of the variation in family type is due to the different stages in the development of the family, and some is due to problems which arise in the course of this development (Jacobsen, 1971, 29). The different stages in the development of the family, that is, in its life-cycle, are crudely discernible and can be examined using the Canadian family and household data by age of head. The census data also permit the study of those types of families created by "problems" arising in the course of their development or life-cycle.

In treating the family, very few contemporary analysts have considered, within a theoretical and empirical context, the types of families which are not "ideal" types, such as the elderly couple, alone, and past the family building stage, or the one-parent family. (The latter statement does not, of course, refer to all the applied social research on the problems of the older population, or on "parents without partners.") Such families, and particularly lone-parent families, deserve more systematic treatment than they have received to date. In this connection, researchers using census population data have an advantage, since the figures for families have always "forced" the consideration of male and female lone head families. This may be seen in Tables 6 and 7.

TABLE 6

NUMERICAL AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY HEADS,  
BY MARITAL STATUS, CANADA, 1951-1966

Marital Status of Head		1951 <sup>1</sup>	1956 <sup>2</sup>	1961 <sup>3</sup>	1966 <sup>4</sup>
Total Family Heads	No.	3,287,384	3,711,500	4,147,444	4,526,266
	P.C.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Married Family Heads	No.	3,055,804	3,477,404	3,908,825	4,266,432
	P.C.	93.0	93.7	94.2	94.3
Widowed Family Heads	No.	216,641	216,924	213,657	226,950
	P.C.	6.6	5.8	5.2	5.0
Divorced Family Heads	No.	10,108	12,341	15,636	22,115
	P.C.	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5
Single Heads	No.	4,831	4,831	9,326	10,769
	P.C.	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2

<sup>1</sup>Census of Canada, 1951, Volume III, "Housing and Families", Table 136, p. 136 1.<sup>2</sup>Census of Canada, 1956, Volume 1, "Population", Table 56, p. 56-1.<sup>3</sup>Census of Canada, 1961, Volume II - Part 1, Bulletin 2.1-7, "Families by Marital Status and Age of Head", Table 73, p. 73-1.<sup>4</sup>Census of Canada, 1966, Volume II (2-12), "Family Characteristics by Marital Status, Age and Sex of Head", Table 79, p. 79-1.

Data in Table 7 make it possible to examine such questions as: How many "complete" families (called husband-wife" families in the Canadian census), do we have in Canada? How many are "one-parent" or "incom-

TABLE 7

## HUSBAND-WIFE AND ONE-PARENT FAMILIES, NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES, CANADA, 1951-1966

Canada	1951 <sup>1</sup>	1956 <sup>2</sup>	1961 <sup>3</sup>	1966 <sup>4</sup>
Total Family Heads	3,287,384 100.0	3,711,500 100.0	4,147,444 100.0	4,526,266 100.0
Husband and Wife Both at home	2,961,685 90.1	3,393,061 91.4	3,800,026 91.6	4,154,381 91.8
One Parent only at home (including One Parent "Married" heads)	325,699 9.9	318,439 8.6	347,418 8.4	371,885 8.2

<sup>1</sup>Census of Canada, 1951, Volume III, "Housing and Families", Table 136, p. 136-1.

<sup>2</sup>Census of Canada, 1956, Volume 1, "Population", Table 56, p. 56-1.

<sup>3</sup>Census of Canada, 1961, Volume II - Part 1, Bulletin 2.1-7, "Families by Marital Status and Age of Head", Table 73, p. 73-1.

<sup>4</sup>Census of Canada, 1966, Volume II (2-12), "Family Characteristics by Marital Status, Age and Sex of Head", Table 79, p. 79-1.

plete" families? Additional data available make it possible to examine differences in the size, composition and household arrangements of these two types of families and of the characteristics of their family heads.

#### 4.3 Non-comparability of family data in Canadian Censuses

Lastly, it is necessary to consider the apparent lack of comparability of Canadian census family data over time due to definitional changes. The historical development of the concepts of the family as used in the Canadian Census have been described in detail in a Statistics Canada Census Division Memorandum (Gauthier, 1971.) In both 1921 and 1931, a distinction was made, in the Canadian family statistics, between the census family (which composed what is called today the household), and the private family, which was composed of parents, children, and natural dependents, (e.g., uncles, nieces, mothers-in-law, etc.). Although the latter "private family" is not identical with the 1941 Census family concept, it is close enough to permit a rough estimation of trends, particularly because of the nature of these early census tabulations for "private families". The tabulations compiled from the 1931 census for "private families" were very detailed, and it is possible to distinguish between "families" of one person (for which there is no equivalent in the 1941 and subsequent censuses), and families of two persons (which are more nearly comparable with the "family" as defined in the 1941 and subsequent censuses). Hence, despite differences in definition, and although perfect comparability is not possible, the outlines of certain general trends can be discerned. Furthermore, trend study over recent decades — a thirty year period if the 1971 Census is included — is possible because of the availability of data based on the census family concept since 1941, for decennial censuses. Such trend study is further enhanced and facilitated by some data according to the same concept, which are available, since 1956, from the smaller quinquennial censuses since 1956, although not in as great a detail as the data from the larger censuses.

5. *Limitations and advantages, for research purposes, of the Canadian Census data on families and households.*

There are both limitations and advantages to the research use of the data on families and households which are presently being compiled by the Canadian census, and these are summarized here. The limitations arise, for the most part, from the nature of the census itself as an instrument for the collection and preparation of data for research purposes.

There are certain types of data which simply cannot be made available from the present census questions. For example, the census questionnaire does not include questions on adoption, nor on whether a person has been married more than once. (However, with the introduction on the 1971 Census questionnaire, of a new question on date of first marriage of the male population, it *may* be possible to identify, from the 1971 Census, those couples *assumed* to be in their first marriage. The latter is regarded as a fairly safe assumption if both spouses give the same ~~data, date~~ of first marriage on their census returns. As yet, it is too soon to know what the quality of these data will be. Also, greater efforts will have to be made to develop and obtain usable statistical data on divorce and re-marriage from other sources of information, such as the annual registration data, and sample surveys).

Because of certain conventions in the Canadian Census relating to the designation and tabulation of household head and family head, some of the census data may not, in all cases, give a true picture of "headship." For example, in family households where husband and wife are both present, the head of the household is the husband rather than the wife. Where there is one parent only with an unmarried child or children, the parent is considered as the head. Similarly, in the preparation of family data, the husband is automatically tabulated as head of the family rather than the wife. And, in families where an elderly couple, or elderly parents are maintained by an adult child or children living with them, the parents or parent is automatically tabulated as the head, despite the fact that the adult "child" is, in all matters, the virtual head of the family.

Certain social and demographic trends are creating families which embody for Canada, "new departures" in family living, as for example, families created by the adoption of children by single "parents", and the rearing of illegitimate children by unwed parents. Such families (like common-law unions), remain "logically" within the boundaries of given definitions and current practices in the Canadian Census, but they cannot be identified for close examination in the census data.

Furthermore, the federal census is taken only at certain stated intervals, and while it can provide information in considerable detail decennially, there is less detail available from the quinquennial censuses. The family estimates which are prepared in the Census Division of Statistics Canada on a yearly basis are extremely useful (Wakil, 1971), but they are not

prepared in sufficient detail to serve the purposes of in-depth, analytical research on the family.

In addition to its variation in scope, and its periodicity, the data to be obtained from the census must be planned some years in advance of the actual census — taking, and becomes available only some time after the census is over. This creates problems of timeliness: data are not available for distribution when desired and needed by users. And, lastly, there is some indication that the family and household data from the Canadian census are often not prepared nor published in a form that lends itself to the investigation of the kinds of questions researchers want to ask, and want to be able to answer, about families.

Notwithstanding these limitations, census and related data can be used to expand our empirical knowledge of families in Canada, and of certain aspects of their living and housing arrangements.

Using census data supplemented by other relevant data, it is possible to obtain a picture, over time, of the trends in the size of families as measured by the number of persons, or the number of children at home. This may be seen in Table 1, and in the work of Kalbach and McVey (1971), and Wakil (1971). The composition and structure of families can also be studied on the basis of data according to the marital and family status of the head, cross-classified by selected characteristics of the head and the spouse. Furthermore, different kinds of families, such as young families, farm families, low income families, families of working mothers, etc., can be examined in terms of their size, composition and structure, and according to various characteristics of the family head, such as religion, mother tongue, labour force attachment, etc. Census data on families and households collected on a regional as well as on a national basis make it possible to compare aspects of families in the different provinces, metropolitan areas, and regions of Canada.

And, lastly, the information obtained on trends and aspects of Canadian families can be usefully integrated into the sociological analysis of family life in Canada and its regions. Trend data on the marital status and sex distributions of family heads, on the dependancy and the attachment of youth to their families, and on the living arrangements of the family and non-family population can be used as a vehicle to illustrate the growing "strengths" or "weaknesses" of the family unit as we know it. It may also be possible to use fruitfully, demographic data and results in the examination of changes in what the sociologists call the "power structure" of the family. Data on trends in the size of families, childspacing, and age at marriage could be used to study and clarify some aspects of the changing relationships between husband and wife, and between parents and children in the Canadian family, and also perhaps to demonstrate the increasing conformity of Canadians in recent decades in regard to their marriage and family building patterns (Canada, 1968, 2-55).

Research on the family in Canada using census population data should increase the possibility of making cross-cultural comparisons. There is, admittedly, a wide variety of definitions referring to families considered as residential units (United Nations, 1959, 75). Furthermore, the way in which such data are prepared and published by different countries pose certain problems for researchers. However, the empirical work of Ogburn and Goode, and of Glick and Burch has shown conclusively that, for the investigation of certain questions, the family and household data of different countries, with, and sometimes without certain adjustments, can be used for purposes of cross-cultural comparisons.

## 6. Conclusion

It is the view taken here that, for the time being, the definition of the family currently in use in the Canadian census is the most appropriate tool for isolating out those aspects which make a variety of units in Canada distinguishable as families. Furthermore, the creation of data according to the additional concepts of economic family and household, serve to supplement the data obtained from the census family concept. The intention to create data, in connection with the 1971 Census, according to pre-specified definitions for mover families and migrant families will further enlarge the data resources available for the study of the family in Canada.

Even so, there are considerations which make it necessary to re-evaluate, on a continuing basis, the current definitions of family and household used in the Canadian Census, and the data compiled and tabulated on the basis of these definitions. Anticipated trends in marital status distributions, in child-bearing and child-rearing outside of marriage, and in the household and living arrangements of family and non-family persons, as well as the pressing need for family and housing data for a host of social policy purposes, indicate that new or even additional ways of defining and tabulating data for families may have to be tried.

The use of the Canadian Census household and family statistics by researchers will yield feed-back benefits to the planning and preparation of these data, and will improve their suitability for research.

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